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ABSTRACT

Noting that nonverbal communication classes rarely teach students to analyze their own nonverbal communication behavior, this paper presents five class activities that provide students with objective measures of their nonverbal selves. The exercises in the paper allow students to analyze their vocalics, facial kinesics, dress, and appearance. Every activity requires students to have others anonymously assess their behavior. Course instructors may assign a final paper which allows students to process and synthesize information gained through the class activities in the paper. (RS)

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NONVERBAL MEASURES OF SELF ASSESSMENT

By

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NONVERBAL MEASURES OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

RATIONALE

While nonverbal classes discuss, study, and observe human behavior, they rarely teach students to analyze their own nonverbal communication. Students may complete these courses and still fail to analyze the unspoken messages they send. Even if students contemplate their personal images, they may fail see themselves as others do. They may be sending unintentional signals. A well designed nonverbal communication course can help meet this needs with experimental learning exercises in self analysis.

These activities provide students with objective measures of their nonverbal self. Based on the information they receive, they can determine if they want to alter their image or embrace it. In some cases they may decide to maintain their nonverbal communication even though it has some potential liabilities. In other situations, students may alter one dimension of their image to improve their communication. These exercises are not designed to tell students how to act, but rather to give them insights into how others might react to them. Student must make the choice.

The exercises allow students to analyze their vocalics, facial kinesics, dress, and appearance. Every activity requires students have others anonymously access their behavior. The results of these experiments are personal and should be treated confidentially. The professor may have students write a final paper which allows them to process and to synthesize this information.

EXERCISE 1 A : VOCALICS

Many business hire consultants to teach executives how to use to their voice to maximize their credibility. Voices communicate powerful information about individuals. For example, others can determine if someone is happy or sad, depressed or excited, strong or weak, etc. Those who learn to maximize their voices may increase their credibility.

By asking another person to interpret, students learn if they express emotions accurately. Unfortunately everyone interprets nonverbal communication with the same degree of accuracy, so several people must assess each student's voice.

PROCEDURE

Students should form dyads and turn their chairs back to back. They will be required to say, "The Rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain, " while communicating various emotions. Then the professor will distribute a list of emotions to senders and a score sheet to the listeners. When they have completed the process they will determine how many emotions they communicated accurately. Then they will switch partners and go through this process again with a reorganized list of emotions. This exercise will take approximately 25 minutes.

STUDENTS SELF ASSESSMENT SHEETS

Please say "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain, " while communicating these emotions. Use the list in round one for the first listener, round two for the second, and round 3 for the third. When you have completed this exercise, please add up the number of correct and divide by 24 to determine your score. Then determine if some emotions were more difficult for you to communicate than others.

ROUND I

Anger
Happiness
Sadness
Love
Excitement
Fear
Depression
Confidence

Round II

Happiness
Love
Fear
Confidence
Anger
Sadness
Excitement
Depression

Round III

Anger
Excitement
Depression
Sadness
Happiness
Love
Confidence
Fear

SCORING SHEET

Please indicate which emotion was communicated first, second, third, etc.

____Excitement
____Sadness
____Happiness
____Confidence
____Love
____Fear
____Anger
____Depression

When the exercise is finished, it may be repeated so that the listeners can analyze their voices. This exercise may be used before or after a lecture on vocalics.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) Were some emotions more difficult to communicate than others?

2) Who had the highest rate of success attempts? Why?

3) Who had the most trouble communicating these emotions? Why?

EXERCISE I B :VOCALICS

We make assumptions about people we meet talking on the phone. Those assumptions may be accurate or inaccurate. Students should know how other perceive them based on their voice.

PROCEDURE

Each student should record their voices on a cassette player and bring that tape to class. They may chose to record a poem, a speech, or a conversation. They will exchange tapes with other students. Every student will take a tape to three acquaintances outside of class for analysis. After playing the tape, the students will asked the listeners to rate the speaker on the following qualities:

competent	___/___/___/___/___/___/___incompetent
powerful	___/___/___/___/___/___/___weak
friendly	___/___/___/___/___/___/___unfriendly
warm	___/___/___/___/___/___/___cold
intelligent	___/___/___/___/___/___/___unintelligent
attractive	___/___/___/___/___/___/___ unattractive
happy	___/___/___/___/___/___/___sad
confident	___/___/___/___/___/___/___insecure

The listeners should be cautioned to be as accurate as possible and not to use this as an opportunity to adversely affect someone' self esteem. When the forms are completed, they should be returned to the appropriate students for analysis.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) How do you vocally communicate warmth and friendliness?

2) How do you vocally communicate more power and intelligence?

3) How do accents influence how others see you?

EXERCISE III : FACIAL KINESICS

Early in life most people learn to manage their facial expressions and to project an appropriate image. Sometimes people express genunine emotion and other times they chose to mask their feelings. Emotions may be communicated unintentionally. Some people never learn to use this channel effectively and consequently discover that others respond to them incongruently. Facial kinesics may be an asset or a liability.

This exercise allows students to determine their facial expressiveness by using three independent observers. Students should form groups of four. Every student will have his turn to exhibit the appropriate facial expressions. The other three students will score him, and then give him the results of his trial. Students should not speak to each other during this process. Every student will have a turn.

LIST OF FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Each student will be given a different list to attempt to express these emotions.

Student 1

love
fear
shy
confidence
excitement
contentment
depression
anger
surprise
sadness

Student 2

fear
love
shy
sadness
confidence
excitement
depression
contentment
surprise
anger

Student 3

anger
fear
surprise
love
shy
sadness
confidence
excitement
depression
contentment

Student 4

sadness
fear
love
shy
anger
confidence
excitment
depression
contentment
surprise

SCORING SHEET FOR FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

_____sadness
_____love
_____Anger
_____fear
_____surprise
_____shy
_____confidence
_____depression
_____excitement
_____contentment

When this process is completed, the scoring sheets should be returned to the appropriate student. Then the success rate may be determined by dividing the number of successes by the number of attempts (30.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) What facial expressions were the easiest to communicate ?

2) Which facial expressions were the most difficult?

3) When do you want to mask your feelings?

4) When is it important that you are communicating accurately?

EXERCISE 4 : DRESS

Dress can be a powerful indicatoer of social status and personality. Students should know the messages that they are sending.

PROCEDURE

Students should describe three of outfits that they would wear on different occasions. For example, they might select a party, job, and class. The clothes should be described in detail on three different pages. On the back of the page, the student should include his name and indicate what he intends to communicate.

Divide students into groups of five to six, and then collect the descriptions from each group. Rotate the descriptions from group to group so no one will be analyzing his or her clothing. Group one will analyze the second group's descriptions, and group two will analyze the third group's descriptions etc. Each group will be asked to discuss the members' perceptions of the outfits. When they have finished recording their reactions on the bottom of the page, they may turn the sheet over to see what that person intended to communicate. The sheets should be returned to the owners at the end of the discussion so that they will gain insights into how others perceive their clothing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) Is it important to alter our dress for the sake of image?

2) How individuality affect dress?

3) How much should someone be willing for conform?

EXERCISE 5 : IMAGE

To understand their nonverbal images, students will be asked to bring a picture of themselves to class. These photographs will be exchanged with their classmates. Every student will take a picture and an evaluation form to three different types of people. They should not know the person in the photograph. After looking at the photograph, they should complete the form.

SCORING SHEET

Observer's age
____17-22
____23-30
____31-39
____40-49
____50 and over

Observer's gender
____male
____female

Observer's profession

_____

Please evaluate the person in the picture on these characteristics. Place a check on the continuum where you consider the response to be correct.

competent	___/___/___/___/___/___/___	incompetent
intelligent	___/___/___/___/___/___/___	unintelligent
attractive	___/___/___/___/___/___/___	unattractive
sexy	___/___/___/___/___/___/___	not sexy
confident'	___/___/___/___/___/___/___'	insecure
bold	___/___/___/___/___/___/___	timid
assertive	___/___/___/___/___/___/___	unassertive
warm	___/___/___/___/___/___/___	cold
friendly	___/___/___/___/___/___/___	unfriendly

When this exercise is completed, the students will know how these observers see them. They should look for patterns in the responses. For example, do the observers see them as friendly or unfriendly? Based on these evaluations, the students may gain valuable insight into their nonverbal image.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) How can someone change their image?
2) How did the demographics of the observers affect the responses ?
3) Does anyone intend to alter their behavior based on the responses?

FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Student should discuss the results of these experiments in a final paper. The paper should include a section for vocalics, facial kinesics, dress, and image. In each section, they should discuss the literature, the text, and the lecture in light of the way the observers saw them. They should indicate whether or not they wish to change their nonverbal communication and why. This assessment forces them to apply the material covered in the nonverbal communication class.